

Idaho City Backcountry Yurts

Winter Manual

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) Backcountry Yurt system. Please take time to make sure that all members of your party read this information before embarking on a tour to any of the yurts.

After reading this material, please evaluate your party's abilities meet the criteria. Please be aware that backcountry travel by horse, mountain bike, or foot can be dangerous. Travel to and from and the use of the yurts is done at your own risk.

BACKGROUND

The Idaho City yurt system started in the fall of 1996 with the first one placed at the Banner Ridge location. From its inception, the yurt system was intended outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy the beauty of Idaho's mountains year round. To accomplish this, the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Nordic Voice ski club, Idaho City Ranger District, Ada County Park N' Ski Committee, South West Idaho Mountain Bike Association, and dedicated volunteers worked cooperatively together, providing material, labor, and expertise to make the system a reality.

Funding to build the yurts came from a variety of sources such as a National Recreation Trails Fund grant, Park N' Ski monies, and volunteer labor/donations. Monies generated from yurt rentals will first be used to maintain the existing yurts. Any additional income generated is used to operate, maintain and improve the surrounding trail network. This network includes mountain biking, hiking, horseback riding, Nordic ski and snowshoe trails.

TRIP PLANNING

Carefully read this material and evaluate yourself and your party. If you feel confident that you have the skills and knowledge to undertake a yurt tour safely, follow these steps:

- ❑ Make a reservation Reservations for stays within IDPR Idaho City Backcountry Yurts can be online at www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov or toll free 1-866-634-3246. Reservations are accepted 9-months in advance of your intended stay and no later than 48-hours prior to your intended arrival. A non-refundable fee of \$6 is assessed at the time your reservation is made. All fees must be paid in advance of your stay.

Yurts are reserved from 2 p.m. the day of your reservation until 1 p.m. the following afternoon. The maximum length of stay in the same yurt is 15 in any consecutive 30-days.

- ❑ Check equipment lists (suggested lists are included) prior to departing. Make sure everyone in your party is properly prepared, including the possibility of spending the night outdoors.
- ❑ Before leaving, always tell a friend or relative about where you are going, your route to the yurt, and when you plan to return. If for some reason they are concerned about your return, the following numbers are for reporting any problems or emergencies concerning the yurts:
 - ❑ IDPR: 334-4180 ext. 232 or 334-4199
 - ❑ Nordic Voice Ski Club: 344-7371
- ❑ Check the weather forecast. Yurt tours are not recommended during winter storm warnings or strong winds. Call the Idaho City Park N' Ski Area Snowline (334-4180 ext. 403) for snow conditions and grooming status or you can log on to the IDPR's web site: www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov for more information. At the backcountry yurt portion of the website there is a link to a snow depth reporting system, including snow depths at Mores Creek Summit and Jackson Peak Lookout.
- ❑ Before departing, make sure your vehicle is winterized and can withstand cold winter temperatures as low as –30 degrees Fahrenheit. Chains and a shovel are recommended. Remember, Park N' Ski permits are required November 15th – April 30th. Passes can be purchased in Boise or Idaho City. Fines can be assessed up to \$57 if you park in a Park N' Ski parking lot without one. Parking on Highway 21 is not allowed.

DOGS AND SNOWMOBILES

Snow surrounding yurts is melted for drinking water, because of this, dogs are only allowed at the Rocky Ridge yurt in the winter months (December 1st to April 1st). The trail system is for Nordic skiers and snowshoers. It is illegal to operate a snowmobile on the Idaho City trail system. The Boise National Forest map outlines the area as no snowmobiling. Unauthorized snowmobile use in the area can carry a fine up to \$5000.00 or 6 months in jail. The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation may have a snowmobile at a yurt site for administrative or maintenance reasons.

ROUTES TO YURT

A detailed description of yurt routes is found in the attached yurt guides. A day trip prior to your yurt adventure is recommended to familiarize yourself with the yurt's location, surrounding landmarks and learn route-finding tricks that will help you locate the yurt again. If you have any doubt of your route-finding skills, do not go. There have been cases where an individual had been to a yurt on several occasions, yet was not able to locate it at a later date because of poor visibility from fog or falling snow. Also routes to the yurts may not be marked well because of the difficulty of maintaining backcountry winter trails

The yurts themselves are located at ground level, and snow packs can easily exceed seven feet, leaving them well hidden behind piles of snow and making them hard to see from any distance. They are also located in trees, which help provide necessary wind protection but also increase the difficulty in locating them.

Before your first yurt tour, we recommend:

- ❑ Print a copy of the yurt map from our web site (www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov). All adults in your group should have a copy of the map.
- ❑ Go on a day trip to familiarize yourself with surrounding landmarks and learn route-finding tricks that will help you locate the yurt again. If you have any doubt of your route-finding skills, do not go.
- ❑ Before attempting any yurt tour on your own, you should be experienced in the use of a map and compass or the Global Positioning System (GPS) and carry one with you on the tour. Workshops and classes are offered periodically by Boise State University and Boise Community Education to help you learn map and compass skills.
- ❑ Use common sense and err on the safe side. Keep your party together. Turn back if the weather closes in or visibility becomes difficult. The yurt will be there for you to visit another day.
- ❑ Always be prepared. If for some reason you don't find the yurt, carry the equipment and clothing necessary to spend the night outdoors.

PARKING

Idaho Transportation Department employees become frustrated when they cannot completely clear the parking lot because someone parked improperly. In some cases they do not have the opportunity to come back to plow it for a week, leaving upset skiers. In order to help the snowplow operators efficiently clear the parking lots, we ask that overnight and weekday users park close together at the

high end of the Banner Ridge lot, close to the highway. At the Gold Fork lot, park close together and parallel next to the toilet. At the Whoop-Um-Up lot park close together and parallel next to the toilet. Keep a shovel in your vehicle to dig it out in case it gets plowed or snowed in.

START EARLY

Travel to most of the yurts involves a significant rise in elevation from where you leave your vehicle. The elevation rise, combined with the distance to the yurts and possible slow snow conditions can make your trip an all-day affair. It is highly recommended that you be on the trail no later than 10:00a.m. Once you arrive at the yurt, you will likely have to dig out the yurt entrance and toilet.

ON THE TRAIL

Whether skiing or snowshoeing to the yurt, don't allow your party to become separated. All adults should have an Idaho City Area Yurt and Trail System map and a yurt map. Travel at a pace, which is comfortable for the slowest member of the party. If one member becomes exhausted, your entire party is weakened as a result. A slow, steady pace is time-tested and a safe way of traveling in the winter.

CONDITION OF YURT UPON ARRIVAL

It is possible that a yurt can be damaged by extreme weather conditions, which are common in Idaho's mountains. High winds, heavy snow storms, falling branches from trees, and accumulation of snow on the yurt walls could cause rips, tears and/or partial or total collapse. It is also possible that the yurt can be vandalized or items such as the wood stove stolen. These possibilities point out the need to be well prepared. In particular, be prepared to spend the night outdoors if necessary. **Please report any damage or problems to the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation: 208-334-4180 ext. 232.**

DIGGING OUT YURTS

It is important to keep the yurt decks clear of snow. If snow is allowed to build up people may not be able to get into the yurt. We ask that everyone using the yurts pitch in and help keep them snow free. The snow shovels are normally hanging on the chimney support, under the deck or in the wood shed at Rocky Ridge yurt. Be extremely careful when using the shovel. The shovel can easily tear the canvas covering of the yurt. Please do not use a shovel on the yurt roof. A torn roof or sidewall almost always results from improper shoveling.

We ask that you do not climb on the chimney structure; it was not designed to handle a person's weight.

Important: At the completion of your stay, replace the snow shovels on their hooks. If you leave them in the yurt, the next party may not be able to dig out the yurt door.

ITEMS AT THE YURT

In each yurt, you should find:

2 bunk beds	1 log rack
1 futon, both with mattresses	1 tinder bucket
1 table and cabinet	1 water jug
6 folding chairs	assorted silverware
1 two-burner propane stove	assorted plates bowls, and cups
2 propane lanterns	assorted cooking pots and pans
1 wood stove	miscellaneous kitchen equipment
1 sponge mop	1 broom
1 dust pan	1 buck saw
1 dome opener	2 floor towels
1 ladder	1 fire extinguisher
1 axe	1 hatchet

Located outside: a primitive toilet, a fire pit, a picnic table, and a woodpile. We cannot guarantee all the items listed will be in the yurt. Because of the remote location, it may take us a week or two to replace/repair the item(s). Be prepared and adaptable enough to survive without these items.

STOVES AND LANTERNS

Each yurt has a wood stove, a two-burner propane stove and two (2) propane lanterns that use mantles. **You should bring at least two one pound bottles of propane for each night you plan to stay.** The standard screw-in propane disposable fuel bottle is used in the cooking stove and the lanterns. Carefully read the directions on the stove and lanterns. Leaving the propane valve on and not lighting immediately will form a large invisible cloud which, when lit, may cause a dangerous fireball which could singe hair and perhaps cause serious injury. There may not be unfrozen water sources nearby, so the wood stove can be used for melting water and heating to save propane fuel.

Warnings on Propane Use:

- ❑ Turned off valves for the stove and lanterns are when not in use. If not, the wood-burning stove could ignite the gas.

- ❑ Attach or detach cylinders away from ignition sources and only when stove or lanterns are cool to touch.
- ❑ Leave immediately and ventilate area if you smell gas.
- ❑ Do not store propane near the wood stove or when temperature exceeds 120 degrees.

Propane Lantern Directions:

- ❑ Lower the lanterns for cylinder replacement or lighting. The lanterns are hung from the ceiling by ropes on a pulley system. Be careful not to let the lantern hang at eye level or drop them on the floor. The mantles and the glass break easily.
- ❑ To replace mantles, turn off gas valve and tie mantles around groove in burner. Spread mantle out evenly, light bottom of mantle evenly and burn until nothing but white ash remains. Once the mantle is burned, it is very fragile. Be careful not to touch it with a finger or a match.
- ❑ To light, place a lit match in the match hole on bottom of lantern and turn on gas valve.

Note: To reduce fuel consumption and noise, turn fuel valve down to halfway on after the lantern is lit.

Propane Stove Directions:

- ❑ Make sure all connections from the propane bottle to stove are hand tight.
- ❑ To light, hold lighted match near burner and open burner valve.
- ❑ To turn off, close burner valve firmly.
- ❑ Before you leave, clean stove area thoroughly.

Wood Stove Directions:

- ❑ Clean stove window with window cleaner that is provided.
- ❑ To prevent smoke from filling the yurt, it is important to start a large flash fire immediately to preheat the chimney. Place 5 or more sheets of loosely crumpled newspaper, located in the cabinet in the stove and cover with

thumb-size dry kindling. Open the draft control by pulling the handle forward to the high position.

- ❑ The handle is located on the front and center of the stove just below the door.
- ❑ Light the newspaper and leave the door slightly ajar (1/8 inch) until all kindling is burning and a hot coal bed is established. Slowly add larger pieces. Lay pieces lengthwise from side-to-side in the hot coal bed with a shallow trench between so that the air can flow directly into the trench and ignite the fuel above. When the fire seems to be at its peak, medium-size logs may be added. Once these logs catch fire and the temperature gauge on the stovepipe reaches 320 degrees, slowly close the door. (Closing the door before the fire has a nice bed of hot coals can reduce the firebox temperature, resulting in an inefficient fire, smoke, and dirty glass.)
- ❑ Achieving the proper draft is important. The draft can be adjusted for a low-burn rate with the handle fully in or to a fast-burn rate with the handle fully out. In the evening before bed, load the stove at least a half hour before bed to ensure a good fire, hot enough to lower the draft control for an overnight burn. For an overnight turn, set the draft control on a low setting.
- ❑ The ashes in the firebox tend to burn themselves up. IDPR staff will clean out ashes as necessary.
- ❑ Don't burn garbage or plastics because they leave a toxic, sticky residue in the chimney, which can cause a chimney fire.
- ❑ Don't hang anything above the wood stove or place anything combustible within 36 inches of the stove (boots, clothing, wood, or paper).

OPENING, CLOSING AND DAILY PROCEDURES

It is very important to follow these procedures. A checklist is posted in the yurts for your convenience. There is minimal staff to operate and maintain the yurts, so we trust that your group will assist us in keeping the yurts in good condition for the next party.

When You Arrive:

PLEASE DO NOT ROLL DOWN WINDOW FLAPS

1. Find the 2 snow shovels hanging on their hooks. Shovel snow from the deck and stairs. When doing this be careful not to cut the sidewalls with the shovel.
2. Pack the path to toilet and remove snow from in front of the toilet. For sanitary reasons, always use the toilet for defecating. The marked grey water drainpipe near the yurt must be used for dirty water disposal to prevent contamination of snow near the yurt. The snow surrounding the yurt must be kept clean since it is melted for drinking water. This is the main reason dogs are not permitted at most yurts.
3. Clean the wood stove window and start a fire. Please use the directions noted on the yurt wall to prevent smoke from filling the yurt.
4. Do not force open the plastic dome when covered by snow, frozen shut, or open it during high winds. If it gets too warm in the yurt, open the plastic dome with the specially made aluminum pole which screws open the dome. When closing, do not over tighten as the dome may crack allowing water to seep in. Yurt users have damaged at least one dome by trying to open it when it was frozen shut. A new dome costs \$500.00.

Daily Procedures:

1. The yurt is a no smoking building.
2. At night, bring in the yurt equipment (broom, axe etc.,) so they don't get lost during a snowstorm.
3. Please wipe up any excess moisture on the floors with the floor towels or sponge mop provided. Melted snow from boots, clothes, and wood will penetrate the wood floor, causing it to swell and hastening its replacement. Hang the towels on the wall hooks so they dry.
4. To prevent the transmission of germs between persons and groups, please wash dishes using the three-step (tub) method noted below:
 - 1: Fill all three tubs with water. Use the biodegradable soap provided to wash the dishes, then rinse in clean water and dip into the final bleach rinse. To make a bleach water rinse, add a teaspoon of liquid bleach (located in the cabinet) to rinse water.

2: Shake excess water off the dishes and place on the wood dish drying rack provided. Do not wipe dry with a cloth. Use a clean paper towel to wipe down the cabinet and tabletop.

3: After washing and clean up, dump the tubs at the grey water pole outside.

5. Please make a journal entry in the yurt logbook during your stay.

Procedures When You Leave:

1. Thoroughly clean the yurt, even under the beds. Sweep out dirt, wood chips, and snow with the broom. Even crumbs may attract rodents. Carry out all garbage and food to prevent rodent infestations or animals eating through the yurt walls.
2. Wipe down the table and kitchen cabinet. Place all cooking pots/pans/bowls upside down in cabinet so mice do not dance and water does not freeze in them.
3. Pack out what you packed in. We ask that perishables be carried out. You may leave extra propane bottles, but carry out the empty ones. Anything left in the yurt has to be carried out by volunteers.
4. Place any non-perishable food items you want to leave in the plastic food container provided. Seal container lid.
5. Empty water from water jug and coffee pots so they are not frozen for the next party.
6. Move any flammable materials such as paper and kindling away from wood stove.
7. Restock the yurt with wood and kindling from woodpile, so the next group will have dry wood when they enter.
8. Wipe down the toilet seat, close seat cover, and sweep out snow.
9. Make sure gas valves are turned off on the propane stove and lanterns.
10. Return items that were hanging on wall to their proper location (broom, dome opener, buck saw, fire poker, axe and dust pan).
11. Make sure plastic dome is securely shut.

12. If there is any snow on the deck or steps, remove it.
13. Hang up the snow shovels.
14. Securely shut yurt door and make sure it is locked.

SAFETY

Everything you do on a backcountry tour should be done carefully. Conducting yourself safely while using yurts is equally important. Use common sense and care when using the wood stove, propane stove and lanterns, starting the fire, chopping wood, etc. There is no ski patrol in the backcountry and it's about three-hours to the nearest hospital. The closest public telephone to the Idaho City Park N' Ski area is in Lowman and the second closest is the rest area in downtown Idaho City. Call the Boise County Sheriff at 1-800-479-0911 or 1-800-632-8000 in a medical emergency.

You and your party must come prepared. Backcountry travel in the winter requires a great personal responsibility from everyone to do everything they can to be safe. There are many dangers, and the name of the game is to stay alert, constantly evaluate and minimize potential hazards. It would be a good idea to have someone on the trip with good knowledge of backcountry first aid.

There is cell phone coverage for most cell phone systems at the high point on the Elkhorn trail once you've reached the top of the Banner Ridge. There is also coverage from Beaver Creek Summit on Highway 21.

SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT LIST

The equipment list on the next page is a guide to help you prepare for a yurt trip. Remember, come prepared to spend the night outdoors if for some reason you do not make it to the yurt or the yurt is damaged or collapsed. Dressing in layers is the best choice. As you get warm you can take off layers, and as you cool down during breaks you can put them back on. The term "synthetics" on the clothing list refers to materials such as pile, polar fleece, capilene, synchilla, lycra, or polypropylene. Because you will likely sweat carrying a heavy pack to the yurt, we highly recommend synthetics next to the skin that wick moisture away. Capilene/polypropylene undergarments will wick away sweat keeping you feeling dry and warm. Cotton socks, tee shirts, underwear and blue jeans should not be worn because they hold moisture against your skin hastening hypothermia. Feel free to photocopy this equipment list and pass on to all members of the party.

PERSONAL:

sleeping bag
pillow - inflatable saves space
backpack
sunglasses
headlamp or small flashlight
matches in a waterproof container
lighter and fire starter
basic first aid kit
high energy trail snacks
emergency whistle
large water bottle
Idaho City Area Yurt and Trail System
map
off-trail Nordic skis or snowshoes
ski poles
waxes for skis and scraper
Nordic ski boots or insulated pack
boots
knee-high gaiters
slippers or down booties

compass
small knife
toothbrush and paste
synthetic long underwear
underwear
socks
gloves
wool or polar fleece mittens with
waterproof shell
polar fleece or down jacket
synthetic or wool long sleeved shirts
wool, polar fleece or synthetic long
pants
breathable windproof/waterproof shell
jacket and hood
windproof/waterproof shell jacket and
hood
personal medications
watch

GROUP:

Park N' Ski permit for each vehicle
yurt door lock combination
**2 screw-in type small propane tanks for
each day (1 pound containers)**
avalanche shovel to dig emergency
shelter
7.5 minute quadrangle map
roll of toilet paper
roll of paper towels
sun screen lotion
sun screen lip block
plastic tarp to serve as an emergency
shelter

first aid kit that includes:

- first aid book
- moleskin
- gauze rolls
- chemical heat pack
- ace bandage
- 2" first-aid tape
- assorted band aids including butterfly
- triangular bandages and sterile pads

- anti-acid tablets
- strong pain medication
- Ibuprofen tablets
- antiseptic wound cleaner
- body thermometer
- latex gloves
- tweezer/scissor/nail clipper
- small mirror

emergency and repair kit that includes:

- small roll of duct or strapping tape
- extra ski pole basket
- multi tool or Swiss knife for repairing
ski

bindings

- extra screw for ski binding
- heavy duty sewing kit with awl
- stick-on nylon patches
- nylon cord/braided wire
- Safety pins
- Matches in waterproof container or
- Lighter and fire starter

food and drink

OPTIONAL:

snow sled to haul equipment
avalanche transceiver if telemarking or
snow boarding
climbing skins are very useful on steep
sections of trails
camera and extra film
extra set of flashlight batteries and bulb